



# Compost cycle

## Teacher preparation:

**Overarching learning goal:** Students become familiar with the concept of composting, and complete a diagram of a “compost cycle”.

**Teacher content information:** If you don't have a class or school composting system, this might be a good time to start! School compost bins or heaps are relatively cheap and easy to maintain, and in the classroom all you'll need is a small bin with a lid that can be emptied daily. You might like to have a chart beside the bucket with drawings of the food stuffs that can be placed in there and those that can't. Aim to keep this simple: e.g. CAN - vegetable and fruit scraps, CAN'T - sandwiches, cakes, biscuits, meat and cheese (as these things will start to smell and attract flies).



**Hot tips:** Students follow class safety code, especially if handling food waste and using art equipment.

## Student and classroom organisation:

**Step 1.** Ask the students what they have noticed about fruit scraps that are thrown on the ground.

- What happens to them? (*Suggested answers: They could be eaten by tiny animals; they can grow mould; eventually they will just rot and disappear.*)
- What are some other words that mean to “rot”? (*Suggested answers: decay, decompose, break down.*)

**Step 2.** Ask them what they understand by the term “composting”. (*Suggested*



*answer: Composting is the natural process of breaking down food scraps and garden waste, in a bin or heap, turning it into compost or humus (rich soil) that can be used on the garden.)* Does your school already have a compost bin or heap? Where is it? Can you take a short walk outside to point it out?

**Step 3.** Show the class examples of:

1. Fresh fruit and vegetables
2. Fruit skins and vegetable scraps
3. Fruit skins and vegetable scraps in a bin
4. Fresh compost

Explain that these 4 different things represent the 4 stages of the compost cycle.

1. Fresh fruit and vegetables: we grow fresh fruit and vegetables for eating.
2. Fruit skins and vegetables scraps: these are the things that are left over after we've cooked and eaten the parts of the fruit and vegetable that are the tastiest and most nutritious.
3. Fruit skins and vegetable scraps in a bin: these are collected and taken to the compost bin or heap.
4. Fresh compost: this is what is made when our fruit and vegetable scraps rot and decompose. It looks just like soil and doesn't smell too bad!

**Step 4.** Give each student a copy of the student worksheet. Ask them to describe what is happening in each of the drawings on the first sheet. Then ask them to colour in each drawing and then glue each drawing in the correct order on the diagram on the second page of the worksheet.

**Step 5.** Display the students' drawings of the Compost cycle around the room

## Assessment/Reflection

Students write and illustrate a short story about "A day in our compost bin".

## Extension activity



Students can repeat the activity for the compost cycle, but use garden waste instead of fruit and vegetable scraps, for example:

1. Growing flowers and lawns
2. Cutting the lawns and picking the flowers
3. Collecting the lawn cuttings, weeds and old flowers
4. Composting the lawn cuttings, weeds and old flowers